

SPOTLIGHT

A publication focusing on loss prevention information from the Risk Management Division of Washington State's Office of Financial Management

*Risk Management Division
Office of Financial Management*

John Nicholson, Risk Management
Coordinator

Administrative Assistants
Audrey Frisch
Shannon Hatton

Claims & Case Management

Michelle Whetsel, Claims/Case
Management Coordinator

Betty Reed, Risk Management
Administrator

Bruce Lemon, Tort Case Liaison

Cindy Palm, Data Coordinator

John Bilbrey, Claims Administrator
Brian Agar
Kathy Cleveland
Geri Hartley
Thanh Ly
Nazmoon Rodulfo
Dan Sockle

*Local Government
Self Insurance Program*
John Nicholson
Don Johnsen

Loss Prevention
Jolene Bellows, Loss Prevention Man-
ager and *Spotlight* Editor

Loss Prevention Review Team
Meg Jones, Loss Prevention
Review Team Manager
Kim Haggard, Administrative
Assistant

Risk Finance
Nancy Heyen, Risk Finance Manager
Claudia Schmitz

Driving Home A Safe Driving Program

Headquartered in Shoreline, Washington State Department of Transportation's Northwest Region employees manage and work in the state's highest volume traffic corridors. If that isn't challenging enough, employees also manage and travel many unique transportation infrastructures such as floating bridges, tunnels, reversible lanes, and numerous mountain pass highways to name a few.

As part of the Statewide Incident Response Program—a welcomed safety service for traffic weary motorists—they also manage the largest number of “IR” trucks and people of any region. Motorist and incident scene safety is the IR program's top priority. This is accomplished through safe, quick responses and incident clearance in the Northwest Region and statewide. Any incident has the potential for creating secondary incidents such as vehicles running out of fuel or overheating, or collisions that occur in the backup as a result of lane changing and rapid braking. The quicker the original incident is cleared, the less time motorists and response personnel are exposed to traffic hazards and the possibility of secondary collisions. The IR Program has a 90 minute clearance goal for all incidents.



Typical Washington State Department of Transportation Incident Response Truck.

No agency—other than perhaps the Washington State Patrol—provides more services or shares a closer connection to the motoring public at large than the DOT employee.

WSDOT employees are on the roadway in all aspects of their work. So it is no wonder that an emphasis on safe driving is nothing new for a region that hosts unique roadway systems and mind-boggling traffic volumes. The Northwest Region has and continues to emphasize safe driving practices through a variety of activities.

Recently retired Northwest Region safety and health manager Sam Swenson proudly recalled that his region was one of the first to have a safety and health web page on the agency Intranet.



(continued on page 2)

Moving to a Paperless Tort Claim System

Like many organizations in the midst of streamlining and improving operations with technology, the Risk Management Division (RMD) moved closer to its goal of creating a paperless tort claim filing system.

On July 1, 2004, RMD began scanning claim files and sending them to agencies electronically. This new process is referred to as Secure File Transport or SFT. “For the past fifteen years, copies of claims were sent to agencies via campus or US mail,” said claims administrator John Bilbrey. The switch to electronic transfer of files is intended to increase efficiency for RMD and agencies receiving the files. “The electronic distribution also will allow for more timely investigation of certain claims”, said Mr. Bilbrey.

With the introduction of any new electronic process, there is the customary challenge of system tweaks and learning curve adjustments for the new “users” who will now receive the electronic files at their workstation. As the first phase-in of the larger agencies begins, Cindy Palm, RMD's risk management data coordinator, is working hard to ensure a smooth interface between the new technology and its agency users. Currently Ms. Palm coordinates with over 29 agencies, which translates into 65 electronic “accounts”, 36 sub-accounts, and totals out at 150 users. She also coordinates a myriad of other data management functions for RMD in addition to being the “tech help desk” and the trainer for agencies learning the ropes of electronic claim file transfer.

(continued on page 2)

Driving Home A Safe Driving Program (cont. from page 1)

Examples of Intranet safety resources include:

- Regional monthly safety newsletter
- On-line ordering video library with several video topics related to employee safe driving (backing videos and the new Coastal defensive driving video for government employees to name a few)
- Variety of departmental safety and health forms, information, and manuals
- Links to various safety and health sites for quick, easy access to safety resources
- Alert "links" that provide updates for "hot" safety and health topics

In April 2004, when OFM revised the statewide policies in "SAAM" (State Administrative and Accounting Manual) pertaining to state drivers and vehicles, Mr. Swenson and his safety team sprang into action. Although defensive driver training had been made available for some employees in the past, the new 12.20.20 section of "SAAM" (<http://www.ofm.wa.gov/policy/12.20.htm>) specified those drivers who must be trained. Training is required for (1) high mileage state vehicle drivers, and (2) those driving state vehicles less than the high mileage indicator (1,000 or more miles a month), but have experienced a defined trend of repeat at-fault accidents.

Having identified their high mileage drivers, the Northwest Region will begin training in the near future. Like other WSDOT regions, the Northwest Region is coordinating with the central WSDOT headquarters safety office on selection of an agency-wide defensive driver training program.

In another move to bolster safe driving attitude and reduce vehicle accidents, the Northwest Region is requiring all new employees to view the OFM-produced "Safe Driving Habits: A State of Mind" video. "I decided to use it for orientation of all the region's drivers," said Mr. Swenson of the video that features a shot of a WSDOT "IR" vehicle in the opening credits.



Finally, accident trending and analysis helps the region determine where safety emphasis is needed. An annual report presented by the safety office keeps regional administrators apprised of all incidents/accidents (driving-related and others). The report is used to evaluate loss prevention strategies for WSDOT operations.

RMD WELCOMES NEW TORT CASE LIAISON

The Risk Management Division (RMD) ushered in the New Year with new Tort Case Liaison, Bruce Lemon. He started January 4, 2005, taking the position formerly held by Michelle Whetsel (now RMD Claims/Case Management Coordinator). Bruce will analyze and evaluate tort claims to resolve them whenever possible. When not resolved, he will participate in all litigation conferences and related matters on behalf of RMD.

Bruce graduated from UW in 1996 with a B.S. in Psychology, and in 1979 with a law degree from Seattle University School of Law. Career highlights include:

- Worked for a Seattle law firm in 1978. In 1981, he started his own Seattle law firm in the practice of personal injury claims (plaintiff), domestic relations, probate, monies due, and some criminal defense.
- In 1983 he became Grant County (WA) Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, representing the state in actions to establish paternity and/or child support, and also the county and its departments regarding civil matters, including personal injury defense, employee discipline, and terminations.
- Later he served in a number of legal positions in the DSHS Division of Child Support (DCS), moving from Wenatchee to Olympia, where his last position was Legal and Hearings Manager. He handled all litigation matters involving or affecting DCS. He also developed/issued policy on administrative hearings, interstate issues, and other child support matters, including liaison with other states and countries on interstate and international child support issues.

Please stop by RMD and meet Bruce or contact him at 360-902-3065 or bruce.lemon@ofm.wa.gov.

Moving to a Paperless Tort Claim System

(Cont. from page 1)

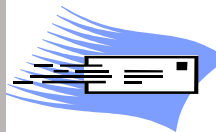
To make the interface with the Secure File Transport system as smooth and trouble-free as possible, Cindy offers the following tips to help new and future agency users:



- Remember user name and password for accessing the SFT system.
- Update passwords *immediately upon notice from the system*.
- *Before deleting anything*, contact Cindy for verification/information.
- Check folders/accounts on a *regular basis (weekly)*. Contents will be deleted automatically after 14 days.
- Contact Cindy *immediately* when there is a change to the designated agency user.

For further information about RMD's SFT system, contact Cindy Palm at 360-902-7313 or e-mail cindy.palm@ofm.wa.gov.

FAST FACTS



Tort Liability payments this fiscal year through December 31, 2004, were 45% (\$10.5 million) *below* actuarial projections.

*Statewide for FY 04, general liability claims represented 78% of total claims, with a cost of \$6,090,154. *Auto liability represented 22% of total claims, with a cost of \$1,722,337.

*Data as of 1/31/05.